Strengthening Our Communities

Metropolitan Toronto's Social Plan
Interim Report of the Social Development Strategy Task Force

Metropolitan Toronto, March 1991

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Social Trends

Metropolitan Toronto is changing. Our economy, our physical landscape, our environment, and our population are changing. And according to the predictions, the rapid pace of economic change of the 1980s will continue into the 1990s and beyond.

The number of people living here will continue to grow. The population will be increasingly diverse and multicultural, and the form and scale of the urban area will continue to change. More people will use the roads, the TTC, the libraries, the community centres, and the parks. The problems of ensuring access to information and services will increase. New needs will emerge, and services will have to change to accommodate these needs.

Different people in the Metro area have different responses to these dramatic changes. Some, for instance, feel a sense of loss, longing for the calmer, quieter, and less threatening days of the past when Metro was small – the days when everyone knew their neighbours and felt a strong sense of belonging. Others counter that the past may not have been as rosy as we remember it. We had different problems that may have seemed just as formidable as ours do now. They feel that despite our current problems, Metro is now a more vital and vibrant community.

The impetus to develop Metro's first social plan came from an awareness of the need to preserve what we value about living in Metro and also to address the problems that threaten the quality of life for all residents.

In September 1989, Metropolitan Toronto Council took a significant step by establishing a Task Force to develop a social plan for the next decade. In

essence, the goals of the Task Force were to set a direction and assess priorities for social and community development in Metropolitan Toronto. The Task Force designed an extensive public consultation process to build a strong common understanding of the issues we all face. We will continue public discussions in the next part of the strategy using this document as the basis for the open dialogue.

The Task Force is made up of nine Metropolitan Toronto Councillors and is chaired by Councillor Brian Ashton. The other members are Metropolitan Toronto Chairman Alan Tonks, East York Mayor David Johnson, and Councillors Norm Gardner, Joan King, Dale Martin, Dick O'Brien, Joe Pantalone, and Maureen Prinsloo.

The Task Force believes these dynamic times present us with a unique opportunity to influence and shape the evolution of Metro over the next decade. We can't stop change – we're not sure we would want to if we could. We feel instead that we need new approaches to tackling social issues and problems. We need to plan better and smarter so our social services systems can meet new challenges.

The Process

Developing a social plan is a large undertaking. Many people – residents, service providers, clients, experts, and civil servants – feel they have important things to say about our quality of life and social programmes. All points of view are valid and need to be considered, weighed, and balanced.

We designed a process that we feel meets this challenge. It involved public meetings hosted by Councillors in 59 communities in our 28 Metro wards. It also involved 11 special meetings with 9 ethno-racial communities: Chinese, Vietnamese, Hispanic, Francophone, Italian, Portuguese, South Asian, Native, and Black.

In 1990 the Task Force consulted over 2,000 residents from all parts of Metropolitan Toronto. At these meetings, a wide variety of residents participated in often lively debate. We asked these questions:

- What do you value most about living in Metro?
- What do you find most difficult about living here?
- What are your community's main social needs?
- How adequate/appropriate are our services to meet those needs?
- What improvements would you like to see over the next ten years?
- How can we keep Metro a liveable place for everyone?

In addition we hired research consultants to hold six meetings with focus

groups to collect more information on issues that are important to Metro residents. The views of the focus group participants were strikingly consistent with those of the community meeting participants. They helped to reinforce our findings.

We also commissioned five research reports. The researchers studied the major trends and looked at new ideas and approaches to considering problems and solutions. Again, the information and conclusions of the reports were consistent with the experiences reported by community participants.

Our Changing Environment

As Metro changes, some aspects of our lives change with it: for instance, where we live, who our neighbours are, where we work, what we do, and what our families are like.

Such changes will have an enormous impact on the future of the city, on our social programmes, on the way we live. The Task Force has highlighted a number of trends to help set the context for our discussion of issues raised by residents and for our plan as a whole.

Population

Nothing could be more important to creating a social plan for Metropolitan Toronto than an understanding of who lives here and how the population is changing. Population growth is affected by a number of trends that have far-reaching implications. Metro's population (in 1991) is estimated at 2,192,721. While that population increased only moderately in the 1980s, the predictions are that there will be up to 2.8 million people living in Metro by 2011.

"As Metro changes, some aspects of our lives change with it: where we live, what we do, and what our families are like."

Fewer people are now coming to Metro from other parts of Canada than are leaving the city. When combined with a steadily declining fertility rate, this means that most of Metro's population growth in the future will be from immigration.

With the majority of new immigrants coming from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, Metro's population will become increasingly diverse. About 30 per cent of all immigrants to Canada settle in the Metropolitan Toronto region. This means Metro now becomes home to about 50,000 newcomers a year – a number that will most likely increase to somewhere between 60,000 and 80,000 annually. An increased proportion of these newcomers will be refugees.

As a result the composition of Metro's population will be different in the future. At present, about 20 per cent of Metro residents are members of a

racial minority group; by 2001, racial minorities will represent about 30 per cent of Metro's population.

As the population gets more diverse, new needs and pressures will emerge. For example, about 40 per cent of the immigrants now arriving have difficulties understanding and speaking English. Our social services will have to find new ways to serve these population groups, and they will have to take into account not only language but also racial and cultural needs.

There will be other significant changes in our population. For instance, Metro's population is rapidly ageing. Over the last decade the proportion of the population over 65 has steadily increased. In 1986 there were over 250,000 seniors in Metro. By 2001 – 15 years later – this population of seniors will have more than doubled, to about 500,000. The fastest-growing group is made up of those aged 75 and over. The growth in the number of elderly people will expand the need for health care and long-term care, home care, and specialized transportation and social services.

At the same time the number of youth and young adults has declined since the mid-1980s, a trend that will be even more marked over the 1990s. But while there may be fewer youth, their need for services is not likely to decrease. They will require better education and skills to get jobs. As well, youth are now underserved, so Metro must develop new services simply to meet the current needs.

Household and Family Structure

In recent decades the traditional image of the household – two parents, father working, mother at home taking care of two or more children – has dramatically changed. Fewer than 15 per cent of households now fit this pattern, and even fewer households will fit it in the future. Already, over half of all women with preschool children work outside the home, and we expect that even greater numbers will do so in the next decade.

Single-parent families – headed mainly by women – now make up about 25 per cent of all families in Metro. The majority of families headed by women are poor. They face significant obstacles in the labour market, and many of the jobs available to them pay low wages.

The average number of people per household will continue to decrease, from 3.8 in 1961 to 2.4 in 2001. Also, the number of single-person households is growing rapidly. This could increase the pressure on the existing housing stock. As more single people come to live in large houses designed originally to accommodate families, much of the housing stock could be underused.

Similarly, the size of our families is steadily decreasing, which could also cause significant stress. For instance, fewer people will be readily available to provide daily care for children and ageing relatives.

The Economy

Changes in the economy in the 1990s will have a major impact on the distribution of our jobs and incomes. Through the second half of the 1980s, the economy expanded fairly rapidly, and we enjoyed relative prosperity. Currently, however, we are in the midst of a deep recession. In the short term this means higher unemployment, greater reliance on social assistance, and more poverty. We anticipate that those people who are already vulnerable will be hardest hit by the recession.

Metro is also being directly affected by changes in the global economy. For example, many local industries are moving out of the city to take advantage of lower production costs elsewhere. This means that service-sector jobs will increasingly replace manufacturing jobs as the primary area of work.

Already, three-quarters of all new jobs are in the service sector, and the number will increase. While these jobs can pay either very low or very high wages, most new service jobs in Metro will be in the very-low-wage group. Because more people will be forced to depend on lower-paying jobs, and because of the high cost of living in Metro, more people will inevitably slip into poverty. The people most hurt will be women and children.

Jobs in the new economy will require higher levels of education and literacy, and technological advances will require frequent upgrading and retraining. Increasingly, different levels of government, educational institutions, and the private sector will have to share responsibility for training. Most vulnerable in the new economy will be older blue-collar workers, youth, and immigrants, especially those with limited English-language abilities. As a result, many residents will need access to training and "safety net" programmes.

Trends in Social Policy

Several trends occurring at federal and provincial government levels have implications for Metro. For instance, the Free Trade Agreement may have effects on both social programmes and employment in Metro. The increased exposure to U.S. and global competition resulting from the Free Trade Agreement may change the way social benefits are provided. Continuing high deficits and fiscal constraints will add to the pressures for cuts in existing social programmes, including federal-provincial cost-shared programmes such as welfare and child care.

Over the next ten years there will be significant changes in our relationship with the provincial government. We anticipate that responsibility for social service delivery may increasingly move from the province to the municipalities, which means that Metro will be faced with new and different obligations. Basic issues, such as who will deliver and fund social services, are the subject of continuing discussion between Metro and the province. Provincial initiatives such as welfare reform and long-term care will also have implications for social services in Metro.

Increasingly, pressure is being put on governments to involve residents and interest groups in the decision-making process. With this in mind, Metro is considering ways of encouraging more participation.

Metro in a Regional Context

Increasingly, Metropolitan Toronto will be influenced by the growth of the surrounding regions. And over the next two decades the region now known as the Greater Toronto Area (G.T.A.) will change significantly. Incorporating the four regional municipalities of Peel, Durham, York, and Halton as well as Metropolitan Toronto, the population of the G.T.A. will increase from 3.7 million in 1986 to about 5.5 million in 2011. Most of this population growth will occur in the outer regions.

Growth can occur anywhere throughout the Greater Toronto Area and have a direct impact on housing, jobs, and transportation within the Metropolitan Toronto boundaries. Although the provincial government has established a committee to address area-wide issues, there is no agreement on overall goals for the Greater Toronto Area. Planning for Metropolitan Toronto services is difficult under these circumstances.

Increasingly, however, decision-makers throughout the G.T.A. are committed to developing a more integrated approach to planning. In Metro, efforts are being made to coordinate the way physical, economic, and social planning is carried out. Within the G.T.A., it is likely that more attention will be paid to developing regional plans that consider land use, the environment, transportation, and social services together and that look at the impact of each area on the other.

We have just illustrated some of the significant ways in which Metro is changing. But these trends give us only one part of the picture – they show us only one face of change. In Chapter 2 we discuss how these changes are experienced by people in Metro.

CHAPTER 2

The Issues

What is increasingly clear to all residents is that Metro is becoming truly cosmopolitan. There are more people from diverse backgrounds, more jobs, more businesses, more things to do. We've also got more congestion, more pollution and other pressures on the environment, more stress on our public and social services, and more visible signs of poverty and inequality.

It is difficult to talk objectively about quality of life; numbers tell only a part of the story. So much depends on what people feel, and people clearly value different things.

Polls and surveys of Metro residents suggest that many of them think their quality of life has either stayed the same or improved in the last few years. Our discussions with residents at the 70 consultation meetings echoed this conclusion. But people are also anxious about the future. Some said they think things will get worse before they get better, and that Metro may, in the future, become an increasingly unpleasant place to live.

At the consultation meetings, people told us what was on their minds. They said they were worried about the high cost of housing, traffic congestion, public transit, and taxes. They talked about the difficulty they have making ends meet and about crime, homelessness, youth gangs, and drugs. They talked about safety on the streets, about the deteriorating environment, and about the need for more services to support seniors and disabled people in the community.

Some participants stressed that it was difficult to describe the services they would like from Metro when they didn't know what services Metro provided,

or how to find out about them. Others said they know where the services are but don't feel comfortable using them. They would like the range of social services to be "user-friendly" and more responsive to the needs of different groups.

At every meeting people spoke of their desire to be consulted about changes to their communities. They made the point that services with roots in the community tend to flourish, while services designed by others – however well-intentioned and well-advised – generally don't work as well. People want a say in decision-making.

"Accessible, affordable high quality child care is seen as a paramount need."

The best way to establish the necessary services, some participants thought, would be to adopt a neighbourhood model. People want their particular part of Metro to have a human scale. They want a more integrated, intimate, holistic approach to meeting needs – a community centre kind of resource that they could help plan. They want to have their workplaces, child care, and health and recreation services near their homes.

The high cost of living was a major concern at all meetings. There were widespread complaints about high taxes. Many people were also worried that their children might not be able to afford to live in Metro.

People think that the gap between rich and poor is growing. As evidence they point to a growth in food bank use, homelessness, and other visible symptoms of poverty. The importance of a well-paying job for survival in Metro came up again and again.

Closely connected to these concerns is the issue of poverty itself – an issue that emerged at every meeting, expressed in many forms: hunger, homelessness, despair, lack of opportunity, illiteracy, isolation, violence, crime, truancy, family breakup, illness, racism. Participants especially linked poverty to illiteracy.

No one said that more money would cure everything, but many said nothing would get better without it.

Housing in Metro was another key issue. Whether for purchase or for rent, housing is simply too costly for many people. People on low or fixed incomes find it particularly difficult to get affordable housing. People want a central clearinghouse of information about vacancies and tenants' rights, as well as information about how to develop community-based housing.

Many residents hate the monster homes that throw the scale of the community off balance, and they dread high-rise, high-density housing unless provisions are made to protect dignity, safety, privacy, and pleasurable common spaces.

Many participants greatly value Metro's racial diversity and the richness that it

brings. They are concerned about racism and feel that stereotypes are reinforced, often unwittingly, by people in positions of influence. At the meetings they stressed that social services aren't culturally sensitive and that paternalism is common. They want Metro's police force and other service providers to be more sensitive to issues of racism and more representative of the community's diversity. Others feel that Metro's high level of immigration is putting pressures on existing services and that these pressures contribute to some of the social problems we are facing.

Members of the ethno-specific groups consulted by the Task Force were concerned about many of the same issues as everyone else: lack of child-care spaces and affordable housing, poverty, crime, and drug abuse among youth. But one significant difference emerged: everything is harder for the newcomers and ethno-racial minorities because they bear the brunt of discrimination, including racism.

Members of the Native community said they faced some unique obstacles. With 60 per cent of all Native people in Metro under the age of 24, services for youth are desperately needed. Friendship centres, more transitional and permanent housing with appropriate support services, and services for women are all required.

But even more important, Native people indicated they need to escape the trap that they always seem to fall into: the lack of clarity regarding which level of government is responsible to provide them with resources. They said they needed more resources, and control over these resources, to create services that will support and strengthen their community.

At all the consultations, older people turned out in great numbers. The strong message they brought is that they should be able to remain in their own communities or with their families as long as possible. They would like to see innovative housing and community programmes to support ageing people. They said that services now are poorly coordinated. They would like to be able to continue to participate in and contribute to society.

Just as clearly, participants at every meeting stressed that a society that doesn't care properly for its children has no future. Many of them also told us that investing in children and youth is cheaper and more effective than waiting until adults emerge with a fixed set of problems.

Families often need two incomes to keep themselves above the poverty line, so accessible, affordable, flexible, high-quality child care is seen as a paramount need. By high quality they mean a child-care environment that is stimulating, affectionate, and stable, where staff are sufficiently trained and properly paid. They also mentioned the need for supports – financial and

"Older people said they want to remain in their communities as long as possible."

recreational – for stay-at-home mothers, whose service to the community goes largely unacknowledged and unrewarded. Drop-in parent-child centres, park programmes, and after-school programmes are also needed.

Many young people see a bleak future for themselves. They believe they will never get a well-paying job or a job with a future. They may never live as comfortably as their parents. The situation for young people living on the streets is especially frightening.

Many people – youth and adults – spoke of the need for affordable, comfortable social-recreational facilities for youth, designed with the involvement of the young people who will use them. They spoke of the need to refocus the education system and to develop more training, job skills, and life-skill opportunities for youth.

People with physical limitations make up an estimated 13 per cent of Metro's population. They are often the poorest of all Metro's poor. They face the same lack of affordable housing as everyone else but with the difference that they must find housing designed and adapted for their disabilities, which is a near impossibility. Only a small proportion of people with physical limitations and psychiatric disabilities have jobs paying a decent wage. The others live in poverty and face a shortage of social support programmes and recreational facilities.

"People with physical limitations make up an estimated 13 per cent of Metro's population."

People talked a lot about transportation. Traffic congestion worries many residents – they see Metro in solid gridlock before the end of this century – but others complain about public transit. It has become unreliable, expensive, and slow, and the routes don't take them where they want to go.

Environmental issues sparked lively discussion at almost every meeting. People expressed great concern over increasing pollution in Metro, garbage disposal, and the more global environmental problems. They appreciate Metro's blue-box recycling programme and want it expanded. But they also want to see progress on local pollution issues, such as cleaning up the lake and beaches.

People said that some buildings, malls, and parks are not safe because of drugs and increasing violence. Some people see the problem as a straight law-and-order issue and want the police and others to have more resources to deal with it. Others take the approach that it would be better, in the long term, to put effort and resources into prevention by alleviating poverty and youth alienation.

Participants talked about the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of women, children, and elderly people. They stressed the need for additional and more sensitive services to deal with these issues.

Others noted that the parts of Metro Toronto with the best tax base seemed to get the best services. This isn't fair, they said, but it also isn't wise because it leaves some areas seriously underserviced.

Finally, some people pointed out that social, economic, and environmental issues are connected and that the way we plan should reflect this. For example, new high-rise developments may affect transportation, jobs, surrounding neighbourhoods, and the need for child care and other services – in other words, they will affect people, the local economy, and the physical environment.

In general, we heard our residents tell us that they sense Metro is quite different from the way it was just a decade ago. And that the pace of change seems to be speeding up. People are concerned about the future of their communities and neighbourhoods, but they have many ideas on how we can work together to make Metro a better place to live.

CHAPTER 3

Our Social Plan

What is our social plan?

We believe it is first and foremost about looking ahead, and using the information, wisdom, and insight collected to set directions for the next decade. It is also about envisioning the Metro we want to live in. And it is about setting some realistic goals to achieve this vision.

But when it comes to actually making policy out of this collection of information, insight, and wisdom, where do we start?

We heard people talk about the many problems they, their families, and their communities face. We also heard them speak uneasily about the future and about their fear that Metro Toronto is not just changing but losing something that is important – the essential qualities that make it a safe, humane, and satisfying place to live.

We believe that Metro Toronto is unique among large North American cities. We believe that this uniqueness is precious. Metro has clearly benefited from the drive, creativity, and enterprise of the people who have chosen to make it their home. Those who live here celebrate their cultural heritages while striving to build a common legacy for their children.

All of us have struggled to create a city that provides a wealth of economic and cultural opportunities without sacrificing its essential qualities. Metropolitan Toronto can demonstrate how residents have traditionally worked with their elected governments to solve problems successfully. Communities have been valued and acknowledged as the glue that holds Metro together and gives it character and interest.

We already possess a system of public and social services. But our service systems, designed to meet the needs of the 1970s and 1980s, are facing many emerging needs as our communities are transformed. We think this is a critical time. We have the opportunity through our social plan to challenge our old assumptions, examine new approaches, and imagine better ways of responding to the Metro of the 1990s.

We also have the rare opportunity to plan for the future population growth of between 300,000 and 600,000 new residents. We can focus on building and strengthening communities by thinking about the impact of new roads, transit, housing, and other infrastructure. And we can integrate social services into the new and changing communities. Viewed from this perspective, our social plan must be integrated with the other planning processes so that the population growth and other future changes will not have detrimental effects on Metro.

Our vision of Metro a decade from now is a vision for the people who live, work, and play here. Quite simply, we want a city in which as many people as possible have a decent quality of life. This means we have to preserve what is unique, strengthen what is weak, support what works, and reach out in innovative and bold ways to meet new needs and tackle new challenges.

The Task Force has reflected on this and on the ideas, passion, and commitment of the people who live in Metro. We have developed a set of principles to guide the development of the social plan – to give meaning to our vision. These principles illustrate our fundamental values, and we feel they reflect what we heard during the consultations.

Our Principles

We believe there is a minimum standard of living, and no resident of Metropolitan Toronto should fall below this level. The standard includes having sufficient nutritious food, adequate and affordable shelter, and sufficient clothing. It also includes the ability to live in safety, free from violence -- including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in the home and in the community.

We believe residents should have equal access to the diversity, wealth of opportunities, and benefits of Metropolitan Toronto.

We believe Metropolitan Toronto is enriched by its diversity, and we are opposed to any form of discrimination based on age, disability, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background.

We believe the qualities that have made Metropolitan Toronto liveable must be preserved by ensuring that all individuals and social groups feel a sense of ownership of the region's social, political, economic, and cultural life and have an investment in the future.

We believe in strong communities and neighbourhoods that provide their members with identity, a sense of belonging, and support.

We believe it is of paramount importance to consider the social benefits and consequences of all plans and policies, to ensure their consistency with these principles.

CHAPT

Our Goals

How can our shared vision of Metro be realized?

We believe this shared vision is most likely to be achieved by strengthening and supporting the communities that constitute Metropolitan Toronto.

Metropolitan Toronto contains about 2.2 million people spread over 630 square kilometres. As individuals, most of us regularly relate to only a small part of the city. We live in neighbourhoods, shop at certain stores, go to work or school at the same places every day, drive a car or ride the TTC, and go to local theatres, libraries, and swimming pools. We create networks with family, neighbours, friends, cultural groups, and co-workers. These networks make up our communities.

"Community," in other words, means more than geography. In modern cities, communities of interest, culture, and social ties are often as important to people as the neighbourhoods they live in. Our Metro community as a whole is increasingly composed of individuals who participate in many types of communities.

The communities we belong to are important for two reasons. First, it is through our communities that we are most likely to get the resources and services we need. Second, it is the diversity and layering of our networks that gives communities their spirit and character. And it is the variety and interaction of these communities that gives Metropolitan Toronto its vitality.

Our consultations confirmed that communities are important to Metro residents. The unanimous feeling of the participants is that people want to live in strong communities, not in a faceless crowd.

We believe the concept of vibrant, workable communities lies at the heart of Metro's social vision. We feel that Metro's communities have played a key role in making the area a liveable and enjoyable place. We are committed to achieving our future vision by building on our past successes. And we are committed to supporting and re-energizing our many changing communities.

Our two key goals for Metro grow out of these ideas. The first goal reflects the enduring significance of communities in the life of our city. The second reflects the critical importance of access to services and resources, which we believe can best be achieved through strong communities.

Our Goals

- **Metro will promote strong and cohesive communities.**

The goal of supporting strong communities is a natural challenge to a metropolitan area in which people have always tended to congregate where they are most comfortable. The growth that people seem to want involves making Metro's services available to those communities as needed. In meeting this goal, Metro's diversity can be recognized, valued, and strengthened. Informal support networks must be encouraged, and services must be offered in a way that makes people feel comfortable and helps them remain independent.

- **Metro will ensure access to all community resources.**

The success of this goal – broad access to services and facilities – will require a commitment to eliminating the barriers that now exist for many residents. We must provide individuals and groups with the tools and resources they need to achieve equal access. Metro's services must be responsive and accessible to all ethno-racial, linguistic, and economic groups.

Ideas for achieving this goal include locating resources more conveniently and ensuring that everyone can afford the resources and can acquire the skill to use them.

Metro's Role

In working towards our goals, it is important to understand what Metro can do independently. It is also important to know what we can do only in cooperation with other levels of government.

In 1953, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was created by the Province of Ontario. The Metropolitan municipality, which consists of the present-day Cities of Toronto, North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke, and York and the Borough of East York, was created in response to pressures of urban growth and the need for integrated services. The Metropolitan government is based on the idea that certain services common across the community, like

police and social services, should be the responsibility of the Metropolitan Toronto Corporation, while services of a local nature should be provided by local municipalities.

The ruling body, Metropolitan Toronto Council, consists of 34 people, one of whom is elected Metropolitan Toronto Chairman.

Metro government exercises considerable political influence in a number of areas based on our first-hand knowledge of the needs of our communities. For instance, the province decides the level of General Welfare Assistance. However, the way programmes are actually delivered and the provision of additional but related services are determined by Metro in response to local requirements.

Metropolitan Toronto Council has jurisdiction over garbage disposal; ambulances; homes for the aged; some affordable housing; the central library; police; public transit (including transportation for people with physical limitations); child care; regional parks, zoos, golf courses, stadiums, arenas; water purification; traffic control; welfare assistance and hostels; road construction and maintenance; sewage disposal; and other services such as operating the Toronto Island ferry and Exhibition Place and collecting parking fines.

Metro does not determine what happens in schools. It does not take a hand in public health matters, local parks and recreation programmes, or community centres. It does not change building by-laws or reschedule garbage collection. Metro alone can't increase welfare allowances or build a hospice. Metro can't tear down a jail or open a fire hall. These matters have a huge impact on people's lives, but the key responsibility for them rests with local governments, the province, or Ottawa, and not with Metropolitan Toronto.

Given our role and responsibilities, how then can Metro achieve these goals? When Metro has authority to act, the goals will provide direction. Where the cooperation of other governments is required, we are committed to working to achieve that cooperation.

In the next chapter, we spell out in more detail some options for achieving our goals.

CHAPTER 5

Directions

We believe that our goals are important. They can turn what we deeply believe (our principles) into statements that help to guide our actions and tell us *what* our main directions should be.

But, after all, these goals are still just words. We realize that we need to think about and discuss ways of dealing with the issues and problems that face us all. We have to determine *how* to achieve our goals.

In this section we discuss six issues and ask basic questions about each. In most cases, our questions are general ones about how we should proceed, how far we should go, and what our priorities should be. A few questions call for more specific input. We also suggest some options and strategies.

People with widely differing interests and experience will be reading and responding to this report. We know that some of you will be more interested in some questions than in others or will feel better able to respond to some questions than to others. Some readers may raise additional important questions.

The issues confronting us are difficult ones. Poverty, equal access to services, better ways of making decisions: these are but three of the areas where new approaches are required. Tell us what you think. Whether you are a resident, service provider, client, "expert," or civil servant, we need your help. By planning and acting together, we will all benefit.

Poverty

Poverty weakens communities. Poverty also creates barriers that prevent people from getting access to needed services.

We know that the Metro community is changing, and you told us that there are fewer opportunities for many people here. Some of you wondered if the high cost of living would make it even harder for those with low incomes to cope. You want to see a community where no one is denied the basics of life. We agree.

Currently, Metro government assists people in several ways:

- We deliver social assistance (welfare).
- We offer employment training and counselling to people entering the workforce.
- We help people afford many programmes, from child care to nursing, by providing subsidies.
- We fund community organizations to deliver a range of programmes and we make staff available to work closely with communities.

Tough decisions have to be made now to fight poverty in Metro. More people require assistance but resources are increasingly scarce. We have to respond in the short run, but we must also look ahead.

We need your views to choose ways of helping people and communities – ways that will work and that will use our resources effectively.

Our Questions

What can be done to help all our residents to be free from hunger, to find adequate shelter, and to have other basic necessities?

In general, in what ways can Metro help people support themselves and remain independent?

How can Metro make sure that people receiving welfare have the opportunity to become independent?

How can Metro help people in need in a way that treats them with respect? In a way that increases, rather than limits, their opportunities and choices?

How can Metro support vulnerable communities?

Access

Our community has many good programmes and services. Sometimes it is hard to find out about them, or to use them, because of the existence of certain barriers, including language, discrimination, geography, and poverty. We want to remove these barriers.

Our aim is simple but not easy: to help people get equal, adequate, and secure access to the support and resources they need.

We can we do this by being creative and innovative. We want to tackle this challenge with as many fresh ideas as possible.

Our Questions

Three aspects of access especially concern us.

Information

How can information about programmes and services best be made available and accessible to Metro's residents?

Should information be available to people:

— in the language they speak?

— at their levels of literacy?

— using specialized communication methods for people with physical limitations?

And what limits, if any, should be placed on these efforts?

"We must make information about programs and services accessible to all Metro residents."

Metro's Resources

We have mentioned barriers that make it difficult for many people to have access to resources, including programmes and services. We believe steps must be taken to improve, publicize, and encourage access.

How can Metro best ensure that its programmes and services are accessible to residents?

What can Metro do to remove the barriers that prevent people from having adequate or equal access to our programmes and services? Which barriers should we tackle first?

Service Delivery

Traditionally, large mainstream institutions and agencies have been expected to serve the whole community. Recently, smaller and more specialized agencies have developed to meet the often unique needs of our increasingly diverse population. We think both kinds of agencies have a role to play in delivering services.

How can large agencies or institutions best meet the unique needs of Metro's many diverse groups?

When should Metro support smaller, more specialized agencies? What kind of needs or groups can these agencies best serve?

What should Metro's role be? Should we simply be a funder or should we take a more active role (for example, encouraging more cooperation between mainstream and smaller, community-based agencies)?

Involving Communities

We were often told that Metro's residents want the chance to have a meaningful say in the decisions that affect their lives. This is important. Participation by our residents in the decision-making process creates a sense of ownership that in turn helps to produce stronger communities. Local residents are also familiar with service needs and access problems and can help find productive solutions to those problems.

This means involving people in the way we make certain decisions in Metro and in the way we deliver certain social services. It may mean changing the way things are now done. We have some ideas but many questions.

We realize there are many ways communities and individuals can have a bigger say in the decisions we make in Metro government. We want to introduce three possible options.

Consultation Option
Metro would create a mandatory and accessible consultation process to get residents' views, opinions, and knowledge about local needs and ways of addressing them. It would be very important to make sure that disadvantaged populations have the information and resources to participate effectively. Decision-making authority and control would remain with Metro Council.

Advisory Option
Metro government already has a number of functioning advisory committees. The advisory option would mean creating additional committees and opportunities for residents to participate. Residents would be involved in the development of programmes, policies, and proposals. Final decisions would still be made by Metro Council, but these would be based on recommendations from the advisory committees.

Community Control Option
Metro government would delegate some of its own decision-making power and influence to local communities and service agencies. In this option, the community would have complete control over those aspects of decision-making given to it, such as funds, resources, plans, and programmes.

Our Questions

What do you think of these options? Are there other options that are better?

Do some options make sense for some decisions but not others?

What are the implications of these different options for those likely to be affected:
— How do we ensure that everyone has equal access to the decision-making process?
— How can we ensure that consistent levels of service exist throughout the municipality?
— How can decision-makers be held accountable for their actions under these different options?

Planning and Coordination

Better planning and coordination of services can play a role in improving access to services. We think Metro is in an excellent position to do this planning because of our unique position between senior levels of government and the community.

The municipality currently serves as a link between service providers, planners at other levels of government, and service funders. Although our efforts until now have been largely informal, Metro could play a more formal role in planning and coordinating social services within its boundaries.

Our Questions

Should Metro continue its current role, linking the participants within the social services system? Or should Metro play a stronger role, coordinating all community-based social services within its boundaries? What are the implications of each role?

Are there other ways Metro can ensure better coordination of the planning, funding, and delivery of community services?

Assessing Social Impacts

We believe that social, economic, land-use, and environmental planning processes should be more integrated. Specifically, we think that it is important to look at the social benefits and consequences of all our plans and policies. For instance, economic and land-use plans have social impacts that should be examined.

We think good planning requires that we measure both the benefits and the costs of planned changes, and that we make an assessment of how Metro's future will be affected by the changes.

Our Questions

How can Metro best assess how communities are affected by new initiatives?

Should Metro develop and adopt a formal "social impact assessment" process? How would it work?

Determining How We Pay for Community Services

All of Metro's funds for social programmes and services come either from local residents through property taxes or from the senior levels of government that share the costs of certain services.

In the past several years, Metro has seen its costs for many programmes rise as senior levels of government impose restraints. At the very time when less money has been available from the provincial and federal governments, we have faced sharp increases in the volume of service we must provide. In addition, little money has been available from the senior governments to meet new needs.

As a result there are rapidly increasing demands on Metro's resources. It is clearly not an option to simply increase tax bills to help us reach our goals. We must find creative strategies and new funding sources. We need to experiment with different possibilities, such as:

- raising revenues through user fees, or development levies;
- reallocating existing resources;
- phasing in new services at a pace that respects our residents' ability to pay for services; and
- using existing resources more efficiently.

We will most probably need to take a combination of actions to find the money to implement our vision.

"We cannot simply increase taxes to help us reach our goals. We must find creative strategies."

Our Questions

How can Metro achieve our goals given our current financial constraints? What should our priorities be?

Can you offer ideas about how Metro can generate additional revenue or reallocate existing funding?

CHAPTER 6

Where Do We Go From Here?

In the spring of 1991, the Task Force will come back to your communities to ask for your reactions to our social planning efforts.

This time we will discuss both our broad goals for the future and the best strategies for achieving them. Your ideas and opinions will be carefully considered, and our final report will reflect your fresh perspectives and new ideas.

Later in 1991, we will submit the Task Force's final report to Metropolitan Toronto Council. It will contain the action priorities that we think are important, as well as a plan for implementation.

There is much work to do. We recognize the importance of this work and the part it will play in shaping our future city. We have been challenged by what we've heard and informed by the research we have commissioned.

We want to begin our discussions by posing questions that will help you focus on some of the critical issues.

> Are the principles right? Are the goals the right ones? What do they mean to you?
>
> What haven't we considered?

Maybe you'd like to simply list your own priorities: that too would be helpful. What would you see as a short-term objective, a medium-term objective, or something to aim for ten years from now?

We, the members of the Social Development Strategy Task Force, have completed the first stage of our mandate. Our next step will be to report to the Metropolitan Toronto Council, but first we must hear from you.

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Other Publications

If you are interested in obtaining copies of any of these publications, contact the Social Development Strategy Task Force at the address provided on page 27 of this report.

A Summary of *Strengthening Our Communities: Metro's Social Plan.* Metro Toronto Social Development Strategy Task Force, April, 1991. Also available in the following languages: French, Italian, Chinese, Portuguese, Greek, Spanish, Vietnamese and Hindi.

"What We Heard." A Summary of the Community Consultations held for the Metropolitan Toronto Social Development Strategy Task Force, April, 1991.

Background Reports Prepared for the Social Development Strategy Task Force

1. Canadian Urban Institute, *Metro in Transition: An Overview of Demographic, Economic and Public Policy Trends and their Implications for the Social Development Strategy.* A report prepared for the Metro Toronto Social Development Task Force, September, 1990.

2. Devlin and Associates Incorporated, *Strategies for Making the Community Better for Disadvantaged Households: A Research Paper.* A report prepared for the Metro Toronto Social Development Task Force, September, 1990.

3. Development Initiatives Inc., *Alternative Models for the Delivery of Human Services in Large Urban Areas.* A report prepared for the Metro Toronto Social Development Task Force, September, 1990.

4. The Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, *Opportunities for Community Empowerment and Community Based Planning.* A report prepared for the Metro Toronto Social Development Task Force, September, 1990.

5. Development Initiatives Inc., *Social Implications of a Sustainable City.* A report prepared for the Social Development Task Force, September, 1990.